

- Sub B5
cont
A B
23. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to claim 1 as an absorbent for water and aqueous liquids in preferably foamed sheet materials.
24. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to claim 1 as a vehicle for fertilizers or other active ingredients released over a prolonged period of time.

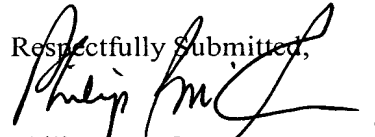
Remarks

Claims 1-3, 5-15, and 17-24 remain in this application. Claims 4 and 16 have been cancelled. Claims 1-2, 5-14, and 17-24 have been amended to remove excess multiple dependencies to conform to U.S. claim counting practice. This amendment should not be construed as any form of estoppel, disclaimer, forfeiture, or relinquishment of subject matter.

Attached hereto is a marked up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment.

Examination is awaited.

Respectfully Submitted,



Philip P. McCann
Reg. No. 30,919

Smith Helms Mulliss & Moore, LLP
P.O. Box 21927
Greensboro, NC 27420
(336) 378-5200

Date: February 25, 2002

File No. 5003073-026US1

CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS DOCUMENT IS BEING DEPOSITED WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE VIA EXPRESS MAIL IN AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO:
COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS,
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231, ON 2-25-2002
(Date of Deposit)

Lorna D. Selvaggio
Name of Depositor


Signature

Version With Markings to Show Changes Made**In the claims:**

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) Powdered, crosslinked polymer compositions for absorbing aqueous or serous fluids, as well as blood, [containing] comprising:

- a) 55 - 99.9 wt.-% of at least one polymerized, ethylenically unsaturated, polymerizable monomer which contains acid groups neutralized to at least 25 mole-%;
- b) 0 - 40 wt.-% of polymerized, unsaturated monomers copolymerizable with a);
- c) 0.01 - 5.0 wt.-%[, preferably 0.1 - 2.0 wt.-%] of one or more crosslinking agents;
- d) 0 - 30 wt.-% of a water-soluble polymer, the weight amounts a) through d) being based on anhydrous polymer composition, and the sum of these components always being 100 wt.-%, which compositions can be obtained by continuous polymerization wherein at least one parameter biasing the polymerization is varied according to a recurring pattern.

2. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to claim 1, characterized in that [the] said recurring pattern is an oscillation about a mean value which can be selected at random.

Claim 4 has been cancelled.

Claims 5-14 have been amended as follows:

5. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 4] characterized in that the polymerization is effected on a moving support.

6. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 5,] characterized in that co- or terpolymer compositions are concerned.

7. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 6,] characterized in that the monomers containing acid groups are acrylic acid, methacrylic acid and/or 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid.

8. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 7,] characterized in that the monomers containing acid groups are neutralized to at least 50 mole-%.

9. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 8,] characterized in that the only monomer containing acid groups is acrylic acid neutralized to 50-80 mole-%.

10. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 9,] characterized in that water-soluble polymers according to d) are employed at concentrations of 1 - 5 wt.-%.

11. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 10,] characterized in that the water-soluble polymers are starch and/or polyvinyl alcohol.

12. (Amended) The polymer compositions according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 11,] characterized in that the compositions are mixed with 0.05 - 3 wt.-% of a compound capable of reacting with at least two carboxyl groups and heated to 150-250° C[, thereby undergoing surface crosslinking].

13. (Amended) A process for the continuous production of powdered, crosslinked polymer compositions absorbing aqueous or serous fluids, as well as blood, [containing] comprising:

- a) 55 - 99.9 wt.-% of at least one polymerized, ethylenically unsaturated, polymerizable monomer which contains acid groups neutralized to at least 25 mole-%;
- b) 0 - 40 wt.-% of polymerized, unsaturated monomers copolymerizable with a);
- c) 0.01 - 5.0 wt.-%[, preferably 0.1 - 2.0 wt.-%] of one or more crosslinking agents;
- d) 0 - 30 wt.-% of a water-soluble polymer, the weight amounts a) through d) being based on anhydrous polymer composition, and the sum of these components always being 100 wt.-%, the monomer solution being polymerized to form a gel, said gel being dried and crushed, characterized in that at least one parameter biasing the polymerization is varied according to a recurring pattern.

14. (Amended) The process according to claim 13, characterized in that [the] said recurring pattern is an oscillation about a mean value which can be selected at random.

Claim 16 has been cancelled.

Claims 17-24 have been amended as follows:

17. (Amended) The process according to [any of claims] claim 13 [to 16,] characterized in that the polymerization is effected on a moving support.

18. (Amended) The process according to [any of claims] claim 13 [to 17,] characterized in that the polymer composition is powdered subsequent to drying.

19. (Amended) The process according to claim 18, characterized in that the powdered polymer product is mixed with 0.05 - 3 wt.-% of a compound capable of reacting with at least two carboxyl groups and heated to 150-250°C[, thereby undergoing surface crosslinking].

20. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] as an absorbent for water and aqueous liquids.

21. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] as an absorbent in constructions used to absorb body fluids.

22. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] as a component in electroconductive or light-conducting cables which absorbs water and aqueous liquids, as a component in packaging materials, as soil improver, and in plant breeding.

23. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] as an absorbent for water and aqueous liquids in preferably foamed sheet materials.

24. (Amended) Use of the polymer composition according to [any of claims] claim 1 [to 12] as a vehicle for fertilizers or other active ingredients released over a prolonged period of time.